



## PRESS RELEASE

### In Memory of Aurèle St-Amant



**Baie-D'Urfé, April 24th, 2020** – April 13th 2020 marked a sad day in the long and storied history of Nunavik's co-ops. On this date, the last surviving member of the few chosen by Nunavik's co-op founders to build their federation has passed, victim of the Coronavirus. Mr. Aurèle St-Amant will be remembered for his professional skills, his many years of service and his unusual personality; but mostly, Aurèle will be remembered for the deep affection he had for the people he served.

Aurèle was indisputably gifted at accounting, receiving certification after scoring the top marks in all of Canada during the 1961 accreditation exams. Two years later he joined the Caisses Populaires Desjardins who appointed him as auditor and advisor to the Desjardins outlets in Nunavik. This ushered the beginning of his lifelong dedication to providing the Inuit with the tools and know-how to prosper autonomously.

By 1965, after meeting Father Steinmann, Peter Murdoch and the local carvers of Puvirnitug, Aurèle became the acting auditor for the co-ops and trained administrators in how to manage them. Two years later, five budding co-ops linked together to form a federation and soon more would join. Although his young family lived in Lévis, Aurèle spent endless months North preparing financial statements, attending meetings, counting inventories, doing whatever the struggling upstarts needed. Despite this, Aurèle never made it seem like a personal hardship; he embraced the people and their ways which corresponded so naturally with the co-operative model he believed in.

Aurèle shared his love for the North with his family by bringing them along during the summertime so that they too could discover the beauty of the land and of its people. During the early '80s, Aurèle worked with his son Eric to create a computerized version of his accounting system for the co-ops, a "Cash-in, Cash-out" structure that he had designed to be efficient as well as a tool for learning. Aurèle and Eric's system remained the main accounting device till 2002.



*"Aurèle played a big role in training Inuit in learning bookkeeping; [he] became part of the Inuit family here."*

Aliva Tulugak. Former President of FCNQ.



Although Aurèle managed to remain pragmatic in difficult times, such as when a co-op burned to the ground or when an avalanche devastated a community, he will mostly be remembered as a warm and modest man who had a subtle but playful sense of humour. During his regular tours, Aurèle was often greeted with an affectionate “Attatatsiagnai” (Hi grand-dad) from local members who recognized his full immersion into Inuit society and appreciated his commitment to Nunavimmiut and their cooperative movement.

Ilagiisaq also remains indebted to Mr. St-Amant for mentoring a number of employees who still work there. His days are now over but his influence continues to resonate. We will miss this gentle giant and thank his surviving family for so generously sharing him with all of us.



*Mr. St-Amant receiving the Order of Merit award from the Conseil Québécois de la Coopération et de la Mutualité (CQCM); he is accompanied by his wife, Jacqueline, his daughter, Nathalie, and Mr. and Mrs. Murdoch (top). With his daughter, Sister Christiane, Aurèle receives a commemorative plaque from Mrs. Leroux, former President and CEO of Desjardins Group and Mrs. Simard, former General Manager of CQCM, in March 2017(left).*

- 30 -

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